

Report to Cabinet

Subject: Creation of Gedling Country Park

Date: 12 September 2013

Author: Service Manager, Parks and Street Care

Wards Affected

Borough-wide

Purpose

To secure Cabinet support for the schedule of works and timetable set out in the report and approval for the creation of a Country Park on the site of the former Gedling Colliery site. A presentation will be made to Cabinet to go alongside this report.

Key Decision

This is a key decision.

Background

Re-development of Gedling Colliery and the creation of a Country Park have been long-standing ambitions for the Council and local community. The existing site, shown at Appendices 1, was a cornerstone of Gedling village and the surrounding area until the former Gedling Colliery closed in 1991. Since then the site has been largely abandoned but more recently formed part of a 2008 planning application from the East Midlands Development Agency. The application included a proposed Gedling Access Road which was to be routed on the southern boundary of a 250-acre Country Park and included new homes and three hectares of land for industrial use.

The downturn in the economy and reduction in public funding has delayed the regeneration of the Colliery, but the Council is currently working with the HCA, County Council and other partners to secure a package to deliver the Gedling Access Road, which will kick start the development of the former Colliery site for housing, employment and community uses.

The idea for the 250 acre country park was first mooted 15 years ago. UK Coal, which owned much of the site, carried out preparatory work but the site remains far from finished.

In light of this, Gedling Borough Council wrote to Harworth Estates, UK Coal's property arm in 2012 to ask them to make urgent progress on the stalled plans for a country park.

Negotiations progressed on this throughout 2012 and early 2013 and on 3 July 2013 Gedling Borough Council entered into a 25 year lease of the site. A plan showing the extent of the land which is subject to the lease is attached at Appendix 2.

Whilst negotiating the lease of the land from Haworth Estates, the Borough Council submitted a planning application for change of use of the larger site to a Country Park, and for the erection of a car park at the Spring Lane entrance (see plan at Appendix 3 showing Gedling Country Park site masterplan). Planning permission was granted, subject to conditions, in April 2013.

Implementation of the Country Park

- 2 The Council Plan made delivery of the country park a top priority. It is proposed to do this in a number of stages.

Stage 1 will consist of remediation work on the drainage, grilling/capping and repair of man holes/culverts to ensure the site is in a good state of repair to ensure the Council's duty of care to the safety and wellbeing of park visitors is met. This stage is expected to be completed by 31 December 2013.

Stage 2 will involve the creation of new access and car parking facilities, way marked paths and interpreted open space habitats. This work is programmed to be undertaken between January and August 2014.

The third and final stage will involve the provision of a large children's play area next to the Spring Lane Car park to be installed in autumn/winter 2014.

The short-term focus is on securing the core work above in order to get the park up and running and open to the public. One longer term goal is to provide a visitor centre however, that will be dependent on securing funding for its creation and on-going maintenance which will be a significant challenge in the current financial climate.

Alternative Options

- 3 The Council could choose not to progress implementation of the Country Park. However, given that it is a local priority and that the Council has invested a significant amount of time and money in securing the land, that option is not recommended.

Financial Implications

- 4 The implementation of the Country Park is supported by the Council and partners involved in the delivery of the Project using funding provided by the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) in the amount of a £250,000 and Gedling Homes Public Realm monies in the amount of £630,000.

The identified funding will be used to develop and enhance the existing site by creating new access and car parking facilities, way marked paths, interpreted open space habitats and a large children's play area.

Any further spend in the future will be subject to additional resources being identified and will be subject to a report identifying what is to be developed and requesting

approval of budget. It is expected that there will be some Section106 money available from the Spring Lane development over the next few years to fund future maintenance costs on the site. But currently none of the funding has been collected as milestones on the development have still to be reached.

It is also the intention to establish a new 'Friends of Gedling Country Park' community group' to identify new funding streams such as environmental grants and Nottinghamshire County Council Local Improvement Scheme funding to help deliver the later development stages of what will become a destination green space for the whole borough.

Appendices

- 5 Appendix 1 Site condition photos
- Appendix 2 Plan showing extent of Country Park marked in green and access route to the solar farm.
- Appendix 3 Gedling Country Park site masterplan.

Recommendation

6 THAT:

Cabinet supports the schedule of works and timetable set out in the report and approves the creation of a Country Park on the site of the former Gedling Colliery site.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 7 To bring into public use a large and attractive area of open space for residents of the Borough to enjoy.